1:Franken et al M, G-5 (ca. 1913-1958) 1960
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Chapter One

Bali: Some General Information

I

The Balinese Landscape

The island of Bali lies due east of Java, separated only by a [31] narrow strait. Its total area is somewhat more than two thousand square miles.

The westernmost district of Bali, Jĕmbrana, was in earlier times [01] fairly isolated from the central part of the island. It had many more contacts with the extreme east of Java, to the west overseas, than with the rest of Bali, to the east overland. An indication of its isolation is the fact that it did not contribute to the cost of maintaining Bali's chief temple, Pura Bĕsakih.[1] This isolation was brought to an end in the twentieth century with the construction of a road along the south coast. Moreover, beginning in the 'thirties many Balinese transmigrated to Jĕmbrana to help in opening up the land there, and that, too, has tended to strengthen the bonds with the central part of the island. Ethnically and religiously Jĕmbrana is the least homogeneous of all the regions of Bali (see Table 4 below).

The main part of the island – central Bali, as the Balinese [101] themselves call it – is the densely populated territory which [33] slopes from the island's high mountain range down towards the south. Cut through by many river valleys running from north to south, it is a fertile *sawah* region. The mountain range runs from the west *via* Gunung Batu Kau ('the coconut-shell mountain', 7,462 feet), and the central highland and lake country with Gunung Batur (5,630 feet, a volcano which has wrought great destruction on the island at various times, notably in 1917 and 1927), to Gunung Agung ('the great mountain', 10,302 feet),

[P. 31 [p. 2] No textual materials on

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in the east. To the southeast of central Bali lies the arid island Nusa Pĕnida, which the Balinese simply call Nusa, 'the island'. At the extreme southern point of Bali is a limestone peninsula which the early Dutch named the Varkenshoek, or 'pig's point', and the Balinese speak of as Bukit, 'the hill'.

To the north of the mountain range lies the region of Buleleng, for the southern Balinese Den Bukit, 'the land north of the mountains'. The narrow coastal strip, which quickly merges into steep foothills, is closed off to the west by the region of Cape Pulaki, the realm of the Invisible Ones of Pulaki, for a traditional Bulelengese the end of his world. Only since a decade ago has there been a roadway going past Pulaki to the west. In Buleleng the mountains run down close to the sea, creating a sharp contrast. The contrast in central Bali is less sharp, but there also the mountain chain dominates the whole highlands and from many a place in the mountains one can see the Indian Ocean glistening in the sun.

The easternmost region of Bali, Karangasĕm, lies to the northeast, east, and south of Gunung Agung, hence for the most part outside the mountain range. Politically it was sometimes oriented more towards the island of Lombok, lying to the east of it, than towards central Bali. Most of the earlier Balinese overlords on Lombok stemmed from Karangasĕm, and the same is probably also true of the Balinese colonists there. In 1930 the Balinese community on Lombok numbered a bit under thirty thousand five hundred persons.[2] For 1948 the figure of forty thousand has been given.[3]

Not only Jĕmbrana was isolated in the old days: contacts between central Bali and the land north of the mountains were also difficult. Moreover the lay of the land in the central Balinese highlands is such that it is easier to travel from south to north than from east to west. Roads and paths from the southern coast northwards are fairly straight and unobstructed, mounting gradually at first, and then at a sharper incline. But if one goes, for example, to the northeast or the northwest from Den Pasar (the chief town in southern Bali, located on the southern spur of the

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island), the road makes its way from one ravine to another in many twists and turns. It was no doubt partly as a result of this topography that no central authority was ever able to maintain itself on Bali with ease. The central Balinese highlands were traditionally divided into five practically independent principalities lying side by side: Tabanan, Mĕngwi (which was vanquished and gobbled up by its neighbours in 1891), Badung, Gianyar, and Klungkung.

Bali was known of old for its rather inaccessible coasts. There were only a few good places for ships to lie at anchor, and the peninsula of Bukit seems to have been a dangerous point to circumnavigate.

2

The People of Bali

There are no recent detailed demographic data for Bali. For such figures one must go back to the last census held in Indonesia, that of 1930. In the 1954 registration for the general elections the concern was of course only to obtain certain general figures regarding the number of Indonesian citizens on the island. Unfortunately the figures are not completely comparable to those for 1930. The census gave the total number of inhabitants, broken down according to country of origin, whereas the 1954 figures give the total number of inhabitants of Indonesian origin plus the number (not yet made available) of others, Asians and Europeans, who had become Indonesian citizens.

The figures for 1954 for the separate regions and for Bali as a whole[4] are given in Table 1, with those for 1930 added for purposes of comparison.[5]

Table 2 gives a few figures for the whole island in 1920[6] and 1930 as regards population groups.

The total population of Indonesian origin can be broken down according to ethnic origin into Balinese and Indonesians from elsewhere; the Balinese, in turn, can be broken down according to religion into 'Bali Hindu' (the term for the adherents of the

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361 311 538 Tĕnganan.[8] The village came to be called Tĕnganan Pĕgĕringsingan because of the skill of the village women in making *gĕringsing* fabrics. The village boundaries are described in detail in the *desa* constitution.

621 133 The topography is extremely rough. The footpaths are very hard to traverse especially in the rainy season, and several expeditions through the *desa* territory and to other villages in the neighbourhood helped me understand why the region of Karangasĕm was earlier described by the military patrols as *kurang asĕm*, 'short of breath'. Running through the western part of the village territory from north to south is the Pandĕk River, and in the eastern part the Buhu River streams through a fine complex of *sawahs*. There are two other settlements in the *desa* territory. Kĕstala, Wra Kĕstala, or Ora Kĕstala in the north is a hamlet of Tĕnganan Pĕgĕringsingan founded owing to special circumstances. Gumung, a few miles to the north of Tĕnganan, is a daughter *desa* of the village of Bungaya. Both settlements have their own territory, the first as a *banjar*, and the second as a *desa*.

621 [162] In 1926 the total population of the village proper of Tĕnganan Pĕgĕringsingan was 603, of which 415 could be considered as full-fledged citizens. The others were either people born elsewhere or people who had transgressed village customs in one way or another. Anyone used to the sturdy figure of Balinese farmers is struck by the none-too-healthy appearance of these valley inhabitants. This is probably to be attributed in part to the fact that the closed-in location of the village leads to a sultry temperature during the day. On the other hand the village has the advantage of significantly longer cool periods, since the sun rises later over the eastern hills and disappears earlier behind those to the west than is the case in the open plains, and moreover the absence of stagnant water, even in the remotest corners of the village, has [164] the result that there are very few mosquitoes, and so no malaria. Other possible causes for the less vigorous appearance of the people are the idle way of life of the actual core of the population and the high degree of inbreeding. The members of the village

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[Frontispiece, part A]

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[Frontispiece, part B]

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[Frontispiece, part C]

2: Covarrubias R-5 (1930-1933) 1938
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orangutans, the rafflesia (a flower over three feet in diameter), and the birds of paradise, are to be found nowhere else. The population of the islands ranges from such forms of primitive humanity as the Negritos, the Papuans, the Kubus, who seem only a few steps away in the evolutionary scale from the orangutan, to the supercivilized Hindu-Javanese, who over six hundred years ago built monuments like Borobudur and Prambanan, jewels of Eastern art.

Through the centuries, civilization upon civilization from all directions has settled on the islands over the ancient megalithic cultures of the aborigines, until each island has developed an individual character, with a colourful culture, according to whether Chinese, Hindu, Malay, Polynesian, Mohammedan, or European influence has prevailed. Despite the mental isolation these differences have created, even the natives believe that the islands once formed a unified land. Raffles, in his *History of Java*, mentions a Javanese legend that says "the continent was split into nine parts, but when three thousand rainy seasons will have elapsed, the Eastern Islands shall again be reunited and the power of the white man shall end."

One of the smallest, but perhaps the most extraordinary, of the islands, is the recently famous Bali — a cluster of high volcanoes, their craters studded with serene lakes set in dark forests filled with screaming monkeys. The long green slopes of the volcanoes, deeply furrowed by ravines washed out by rushing rivers full of rapids and waterfalls, drop steadily to the sea without forming lowlands. Just eight degrees south of the Equator, Bali has over two thousand square miles of extravagantly fertile lands, most of which are beautifully cultivated. Only a narrow strait, hardly two miles across, separates Bali from Java; here again the idea that the two islands were once joined and then separated is sustained by the legend of the great Javanese king who was obliged to banish his good-for-nothing son to Bali, then united to Java by a very narrow isthmus. The king accompanied his

2: Covarrubias R-5 (1930-1933) 1938
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son to the narrowest point of the tongue of land; when the young prince had disappeared from sight, to further emphasize the separation, he drew a line with his finger across the sands. The waters met and Bali became an island.

The dangers lurking in the waters around the island suggest a possible reason why Bali remained obscure and unconquered until 1908. Besides the strong tidal currents and the great depths of the straits, the coasts are little indented and are constantly exposed to the full force of the monsoons; where they are not bordered by dangerous coral banks, they rise from the sea in steep cliffs. Anchorage is thus out of the question except far out to sea, and the Dutch have had to build an artificial port in Benua to afford a berth for small vessels.

One of the volcanoes, the Gunung Batur (5,633 feet), is still active. In the centre of the old crater an enormous amphitheatre ten miles across by a mile in depth rises like a dark blister, the smoking cone of a more recent crater (see map), its sides covered with the black lava spilled out into the great bowl of the older crater in the latest eruption. It is said that this lava has not yet cooled deep down, and when the rain water seeps through the cracks it turns into clouds of steam. Half-circling the new crater is the peaceful, misty lake Batur, its shores dotted with the ancient villages of the oldest present inhabitants of the island. In former times the prosperous village of Batur rose at the foot of the volcano, but today only the villages across the crater remain, those on the safe side of the lake. One day the Batur began to growl and in 1917 it burst into a violent eruption accompanied by earthquakes. The whole of the island was affected, and 65,000 homes, 2,500 temples and 1,372 lives were lost. The lava engulfed the village of Batur, but stopped at the very gate of the temple. The villagers took the miracle as a good omen and continued to live there. In August 1926, however, a new eruption buried the sacred temple under the molten lava, this time with the loss of one life, an old woman who died of fright. The people of Batur, unable to break the spell that links their destinies to

2: Covarrubias R-5 (1930-1933) 1938
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133 361 the mountain, rebuilt their village high up on the rim of the outer crater, renamed it Kububatur, and will probably remain there until again driven away by the anger of the volcano.

773 823 According to legend, Bali was originally a flat, barren island. When Java fell to the Mohammedans, the disgusted Hindu gods decided to move to Bali, but it became necessary for them to build dwelling-places high enough for their exalted rank. So they created the mountains, one for each of the cardinal points. The highest, Gunung Agung, was erected at the east, the place of honour; the Batur at the north; the Batukau at the west; and since there had to be one for the south, the raised tableland (Tafelhoek) of Bukit Petjatu became the seat of the patron of the south.[1] The Batur is venerated in its neighbourhood, and 778 823 the Batukau is holy to the villages on its slopes, but it is the Gunung Agung, Bali's highest mountain (10,560 feet) that is most sacred to the whole of the island. Half-way up the mountain is the mother temple for all Bali, the great Besakih with its impressive stone gate and its hundreds of towers thatched with sugar-palm fibre. The Gunung Agung is regarded as the Navel (*puséh*) of the World. It is to the Balinese what Kailasa and Meru are to the Hindus of India. As Mahameru it is the Cosmic Mountain, the Father of All Humanity.

186 772 To the Balinese, Bali is the entire world. Knowledge of the other nations of which they are conscious – China, Java, and Europe – does not influence their belief in the least. They are simply other worlds that have no relation to their own conception of the earth. There is an old manuscript which gives a description of the structure of the world. Although not very highly regarded by scholars, it gives us the popular Balinese conception of the cosmos, especially as it justifies their faith that Bali is the world. The following are excerpts from a free translation:

539 772 "At the bottom of everything there is magnetic iron, but in

[1] In other versions, the mountains from East Java were moved to Bali. In the *Tjatur Yoga* it is recorded that the Gunung Agung went to the center, the Batur to the north, Mount Rentjani (the peak of Lombok) to the east, Tafelhoek to the south, and Batukau to the west.

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attain great richness and fertility. The burning tropical sun shining on the saturated earth produces a steaming, electric, hothouse atmosphere that gives birth to the dripping jungles that cover the slopes of the volcanoes with prehistoric tree-ferns, pandanus, and palms, strangled in a mesh of creepers of all sorts, their trunks smothered with orchids and alive with leeches, fantastic butterflies, birds, and screeching wild monkeys. This exuberance extends to the cultivated parts of the island, where the ricefields that cover this over-populated land produce every year, and without great effort, two crops of the finest rice in the Indies.

Despite the enormous population, the lack of running water has kept the western part of the island uninhabited and wild. The few remaining tigers, and the deer, wild hog, crocodiles, great lizards, jungle cocks, etc., are the sole dwellers in this arid hilly country covered with a dusty, low brush. Curiously enough, the Balinese regard this deserted land (*Pulaki*) as their place of origin. They explain in an old legend that a great city, which still exists, once flourished there, but has been made invisible to human eyes by Wahu Rahu, the greatest Brahmana from Java, who was forced to flee from the capital, Gelgel, to save his beautiful daughter from the king (by caste his inferior) and who found refuge in *Pulaki* by making the city invisible to the wicked king and his followers.

Another arid region in contrast with the extravagant fertility of the island is the peninsula of limestone called Tafelhoek (*Bukit* to the Balinese) which rises to a height of 700 feet above the sea. This curious tableland, which shows every indication of having once been at the bottom of the ocean, is joined to the mainland by a low, narrow isthmus, but its sides rise almost vertically from the sea, and on the extremity of a long narrow rock, with a straight drop of 250 feet, is the fantastically situated temple of Uluwatu, one of the holiest in Bali. This projecting rock is believed to be the ship, turned to stone, of Dewi Danu, the goddess of waters.

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The sun sets on the Tabanan coast and rises over the Gunung Agung

6: Belo E-5 (1931-1934) 1935
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mine visited the temple on that day, accompanied by his two wives and two children, approximately eight and ten years old. All carried offerings and supplies of food and betel for the journey, but no member of the little group could be said to be heavily laden. They started "in the hour before dawn," which would be about five o'clock in the morning. When I arrived at the temple by motor they were seated outside taking their meal, having already made their prayers and presented their offerings. Shortly afterward they must have started homeward, for I passed them on my return, proceeding at an even steady pace along the road. At half-past three in the afternoon they reached home, apparently not the least exhausted by their walk of over fifty miles, as registered on the speedometer of my car. Even if one assumes that they spent only half-an-hour at the temple, they covered the fifty miles in ten hours, averaging certainly no less than five miles an hour. The road led up and down over several steep hills, and at least half of the way through arid fields, with no tree to give shade. This family, whose expedition I was able to time, was only one of hundreds visiting the temple on that day, and their excursion was in no sense unusual.

Physical Exertion and Well-Being

A great part of the land lying between the high mountain district and the shore is formed in longitudinal ridges which run parallel to each other, and no great distance apart. Between these ridges are the steep-walled ravines, where the rivers flow, and where are found most of the drinking and bathing springs. Villages are apt to be placed on the high ground, so that in inter-village traffic, walkers going North and South follow an easy up or down grade along the top of the ridge. But a person travelling East and West finds many a steep climb and precipitous descent along his path. Every member of the family is accustomed to go down at least once a day to the river or the bathing-place for his bath, and many must climb up and down several times in a day—the women and girls carrying water for household needs, the men going to and fro in their work in the steeply terraced rice-fields, the small boys escorting their special charges, the ducks and the water buffalo, down from the dry ground for their daily immersion. Mothers carry babies on their hips, at the same time balancing a forty-pound jar of water on their heads, yet never do they waver in their erect posture nor vary their slow even pace on the steep and often slippery incline. Little girls of five